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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NAIROBI 002397

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - RAS KAMBONI LEADERS DENOUNCE AWEYS;
FIGHTING RESUMES IN LOWER JUBA

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Classified By: Somalia Unit Counselor Bob Patterson, reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During a November 18 meeting with Somalia Unit Poloff, key Ras Kamboni leaders denounced Hisbul Islam leader Sheikh Dahir Aweys, discussed recent fighting between the Darod/Kabalah alliance and al-Shabaab in Lower Juba and recounted recent events. Ras Kamboni leaders said that they were not receiving support from Aweys and that Aweys in fact was working against them. Darod/Kabalah forces reportedly killed over a dozen al-Shabaab fighters during recent fighting but feared al-Shabaab was receiving reinforcements from Bay and Bakool regions and from Mogadishu. Ras Kamboni leaders told Poloff that an original plan, which had been brokered with the TFG and Kenya, had involved militia commander Ahmed Madobe and the Darod/Kabalah alliance. The plan was scrapped, they said, when figures inside and outside the TFG dissuaded President Sharif and the Kenyans from working with Madobe. We are encouraging all forces confronting al-Shabaab in Lower Juba to resist the long-standing Somali tendency to fracture and re-align when momentum in their favor begins to wane. End summary.

Ras Kamboni Leaders
Denounce Aweys

¶2. (C) During a November 18 meeting, Madobe's second-in-command Serar, joined by Hassan al-Turki's son-in-law Raghe, and Madobe's foreign affairs representative Abdiaziz recounted for Somalia Unit Poloff recent events in Lower Juba. (Note: Madobe himself participated in the discussion by telephone from Lower Juba. Serar had just arrived from Lower Juba and planned to return to the region within a few days. Raghe reportedly fell out with al-Turki several months ago because of al-Turki's willingness to reconcile with al-Shabaab. End note.) The group alleged that they were receiving no money from Aweys. In fact, they said, Aweys was undercutting them by attempting to reconcile with al-Shabaab. Serar said that Ras Kamboni's decision to fight al-Shabaab was taken unilaterally because it was in the interest of the Darod/Kabalah subclan.

Fighting Recommences

¶3. (C) According to the group, fighting between Darod/Kabalah clan forces, some led by Madobe, and al-Shabaab militia in

Lower Juba resumed in mid-November when the rains stopped. Serar said that local clan militias joined by Madobe's troops were positioned at three fronts: Abdi Libriole, Jana Abdile, and Xagar. The most recent fighting had occurred in Xagar, which is located between Afmadow and Dhoble. Serar told us that local clan militia on November 16 captured a technical from al-Shabaab in Xagar and killed over a dozen al-Shabaab fighters. Following the fighting, al-Shabaab was bringing in reinforcements from Bay and Bakool regions and from Mogadishu. Serar expressed frustration that the TFG was not impeding the flow of al-Shabaab fighters out of Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab leader Godane and al-Qaeda operative Harun Fazul were in Xagar on November 17 recruiting for al-Shabaab, Serar said. Our contacts tell us that al-Shabaab forces on November 21 took control of Afmadow. (Note: We think it is unlikely that al-Shabaab will be able to hold Afmadow because it is the stronghold of Madobe's subclan. End note.) Serar said that forces confronting al-Shabaab in Lower Juba are receiving support from the Somali diaspora and the local community.

Madobe Cut Out
Of Kenya Plan

¶4. (C) Serar said that Madobe and other Lower Juba commanders began talking to the TFG months ago. These conversations were kept quiet because Madobe feared that, if made public, they might cause Hisbul Islam and al-Shabaab to join forces. In addition, Raghe confirmed that TFG Prime Minister Sharmarke, as Sharmarke reported to us in October, had delivered USD 50,000 to Madobe. Serar and Madobe said that the original plan, brokered with former TFG Defense Minister Gandhi, was that the Kenyan government would train Somali advisors in

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Kenya who would then re-enter Lower Juba and provide assistance to Madobe's forces and Darod/Kabalah militia. Serar said that Madobe assured the Kenyans that his militia did not present a threat. In order to win support, Madobe's militia had many times captured al-Shabaab operatives attempting to cross the border into Kenya, Serar alleged. Madobe said that Kenya had welcomed the idea of cooperation.

¶5. (C) However, just before his removal as Minister of Defense, Gandhi reportedly told Serar that the training would now happen in Kenya. In the course of their contacts, the group concluded that there was "more than one TFG." Deputy Prime Minister Sharif Hassan and other unnamed TFG officials reportedly dissuaded Sheikh Sharif from working with Madobe, General Morgan, and other Marehan clan leaders. Gandhi asked Madobe to induce the Darod/Kabalah militia to train at GOK training camps but Madobe, suspicious of the involvement of Sharif Hassan and General Morgan, suspected that the plan was in fact designed to get his forces out of Lower Juba.

¶6. (C) Serar said his persistent efforts to maintain contact with the TFG were unsuccessful after Gandhi's removal as TFG Minister of Defense. Madobe and Serar said they were willing to work with the Kenyans and with the Somalis that the Kenyans were recruiting in northeast Kenya but they worried that Sharif Hassan intended the Kenyan-trained forces as an alternative to Madobe and other local militias in Lower Juba. (Note: It is likely that, if the Kenyans deploy the Somali refugees and ethnic Somali Kenyans that they have been training into Lower Juba, the result will be intra-clan fighting and not a united front against al-Shabaab. End note.)

Negotiating
With the Marehan

¶7. (C) The group said that their ultimate aim was to push al-Shabaab out of lower Juba and to unite the Darod in the region. They hoped ultimately to create a Juba State. While

they believed that the Darod/Marehan in Gedo should concentrate on al-Shabaab in Gedo, the group acknowledged that they were attempting to negotiate with the Marehan in Kismayo. (Note: It appeared clear that the group thought the Marehan should govern the Gedo region of a Juba State. The group said the Kabalah, because they represent the overwhelming majority in the region, should govern Lower Juba. End note.) As many as 100 of a reported 190 armed Marehan reportedly left their tactical alliance with al-Shabaab in Kismayo and joined the Darod/Kabalah alliance. (The Marehan change of heart reportedly came after a recent al-Shabaab assassination of a key Marehan business figure in Kismayo.)

18. (C) The group said that Marehan business figures are attempting to convince the Marehan in Kismayo to form an alliance with the Darod Kabalah. (Note: The Marehan are negotiating from a position of weakness. They are only a small fraction of the Lower Juba population. We think that this relative position of weakness in Kismayo is likely to force continued Kismayo Marehan negotiations with the Darod/Kabalah. End note.) Other contacts tell us, however, that Marehan business leaders are attempting to better their negotiating position by reaching out to the international community. (Note: We think that emboldening the Kismayo Marehan could act as a destabilizing factor. End note.)

19. (C) Comment: The stalemate in Lower Juba is likely to continue, with territory periodically changing hands. Al-Shabaab and aligned militia will most likely remain in control of Kismayo for the time being. We think that the introduction of the Kenyan-trained forces would most likely embolden al-Shabaab rather than weaken it, as intra-Darod forces turned to fight each other while al-Shabaab remained in control of the port. Those opposed to support for the Darod/Kabalah alliance appear to have won the internal TFG battle for now. Negotiations between the Marehan in Kismayo and the Darod/Kabalah may bring a modicum of additional power to the Kabalah alliance but any effort by the Marehan in Gedo to push into Lower Juba would only fuel intra-Darod conflict and embolden al-Shabaab. We are encouraging all forces confronting al-Shabaab in Lower Juba to resist the

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long-standing Somali tendency to fracture and re-align when momentum begins to wane.
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